



You Can Prevent the Spread of Whooping Cough (Pertussis) at Summer Camp

Protect yourself, your family, and the community

What is whooping cough?

Whooping cough (pertussis) is a highly contagious lung infection. It spreads easily from person to person if they are not immune. It causes severe coughing fits and spreads through bacteria in the air. This infection can travel through the air when people cough, sneeze, talk, or laugh. It is also spread when items with saliva on them are shared. Items include cups, bottles, cans, forks, spoons, and more.

Living in close spaces like dorms or camps can increase the risk of whooping cough spreading. People who get whooping cough can get very sick and spread the disease to others. That's why it's important to recognize the symptoms, follow prevention steps, and get vaccinated. Any child who becomes sick at camp should receive medical care right away. The health director or camp director should also be notified.

Know the signs and symptoms of whooping cough.

There are 3 stages:

Stage 1 lasts 1 to 2 weeks. Symptoms include a runny nose, sneezing, low-grade fever, and a mild, occasional cough that gets worse over time.

Stage 2 can last 1 to 2 months. Coughing becomes severe – with coughing fits that can be followed by a high-pitched “whoop” sound. The whoop means the person is trying to catch their breath. Sometimes a person will turn blue and vomit mucus or food. They also may briefly stop breathing.

Stage 3 may last weeks to months as a person slowly gets better. People with whooping cough can be highly contagious before symptoms appear. They are contagious as soon as they get the cold-like symptoms until 21 days after they start coughing.

If antibiotics are given they are no longer contagious once they are on the antibiotics for 5 days. Teens and adults might not get the typical symptoms and might not know they have whooping cough and pass it to others, including babies and older people.

Steps to prevent whooping cough:

- 1. Get vaccinated.** Be sure you and your family are up to date on the whooping cough vaccine. It is usually combined with the diphtheria and tetanus vaccines. Because protection or immunity from a pertussis vaccination weakens over time, booster shots are recommended for teens and adults.
- 2. Know if you and your family are immune.** You are considered immune if you have a written record of the whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine and you have all the vaccines recommended for your age. If you are not sure about immunity, talk to your health care provider before going to camp.
- 3. Practice good hygiene.** Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Scrub between fingers, on the backs of your hands, and under nails. Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow. Put used tissues in a lined waste bin or a trash can with a lid. This will help reduce the risk of germs spreading in the air and on surfaces.
- 4. Avoid contact and stay home when sick.** Stay away from people who have whooping cough until they are no longer contagious. If you are sick, protect others by staying home until you are no longer contagious.
- 5. Call ahead before seeking medical care.** If you think you or a family member have whooping cough, call before seeking medical care. This will help the office, clinic, or emergency department take steps to prevent others from being exposed to whooping cough.

*Need a vaccine or want to learn more about preventing whooping cough?
Call your health care provider or your local health department. For more information, visit:*

health.ny.gov/pertussis



Department
of Health